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ABSTRACT

The activities of the Open Learning Institute (OLI) of British Columbia from its inception in the late 1970s through mid-1983 are described. It is noted that the mandate of the OLI was to make available throughout the Canadian province courses and programs to students who were unable or unwilling to take advantage of other educational opportunities. After outlining the physical setting, population, economy, and communications of British Columbia, the report describes the province's educational system. Early considerations of the OLI are covered, including its origins and purpose, internal and external governance, students, programs, and curricula, course development, and delivery and support. The current status of the curriculum is also addressed with attention to courses developed, course design and development, media and methods, delivery system, and course and program quality. Present enrollment, student characteristics, and the basic student support system are also covered. Finally, the organizational structure of the institute, decisionmaking, finance, and interinstitutional relationships are discussed. Information on North American terminology and university degree structure is appended. (SW)

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DERG Papers

Number 8

THE OPEN LEARNING INSTITUTE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA: A CASE STUDY

by

John F. Ellis and Ian Mugridge

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The Open University

Distance Education Research Group

August 1983

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Distance Education Research Group
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA
United Kingdom

CONTENTS

1. The Province of British Columbia 1
   - Physical Setting 1
   - Population 1
   - Economy 2
   - Communications 3

2. The Educational System of British Columbia 4
   - School System 4
   - Colleges and Institutes 4
   - Universities 6
   - Post Secondary Enrolments 6

3. The Open Learning Institute - Early Considerations 9
   - Origins and Purpose 9
   - Internal and External Governance 12
   - Students, Programmes and Curricula 14
   - Course Development, Delivery and Support ... 19

4. The Open Learning Institute - Present Status ... 23
   - Curriculum 23
     - Courses Developed 23
     - Course Design and Development 25
     - Media and Methods 28
     - Delivery System 29
     - Course and Programme Quality 29
   - Students 31
     - Enrolments 31
     - Student Characteristics 32
     - Student, Tutoring, Support and Administration 35
   - The Institute 38
     - Organizational Structure 38
     - Decision-making 39
     - Finance 40
     - Inter-institutional Relationships 40
   - Conclusion 42

Appendix 43

The Open Learning Institute of British Columbia: A Case Study

1. The Province of British Columbia

1.1 Physical Setting

British Columbia is the westernmost of Canada's ten provinces and ranks third among the provinces in both area and population. It has an area of 366,255 square miles (948,544 square kilometres) and a population of 2,744,467 (1981). To put this in perspective, its area is about four times that of the United Kingdom, its population one-twentieth and its population density one-eightieth.

B.C. borders on the Province of Alberta to the east, the American States of Washington, Idaho and Montana to the south, the Northwest Territories, the Yukon and the State of Alaska to the north and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Virtually the entire province is traversed north-south by mountain ranges and associated valleys. Mountain peaks higher than 10,000 feet are not uncommon. The mainland coast is deeply indented by fjords; the central portion of the province contains a series of plateaus; south-eastern B.C. is made up of several extremely rugged mountain groups; and northeastern B.C., east of the Rockies, is relatively flat lowland.

The climate of B.C. is as complex as the topography which influences it. Differences in elevation, slope aspect, latitude and inland or coastal locations account for the complexity. The coastal region enjoys a maritime climate similar to that of Britanny: the flow of air from the Pacific provides mild, relatively dry summers and wet but temperate winters. The southern interior, influenced by maritime and continental air masses, has warm dry summers and cool dry winters. The northern interior is dominated by polar continental and arctic air masses, so that summers are mild to warm and winters are intensely cold.

Obviously, such physical and climatic factors must be taken into account when designing the systems and programs of a distance education institution.

1.2 Population

As mentioned earlier, B.C.'s 1981 population was 2.75m. Its distribution is characterized by a heavy concentration on the southern coastal lowlands, lines of settlement with some sizeable clusters in the valleys of the southern and central interior, and large areas of unpopulated land. The metropolitan areas of Vancouver (1.17m) and Victoria, the capital city (.25m) account for almost sixty percent of the population. Only Prince George, Kamloops and Kelowna (all in the central and southern interior) have populations over 50,000. The northern half of the province (north of Prince George) has a total population of perhaps 50,000.

The ethnic origins of the population are preponderantly Western European (82%). Native Indians account for only 2.4% of the population. Although the figures for 1971 show that the combined Chinese and East Indian population make up only 2% of the total, current figures are undoubtedly higher as a result of recent immigration. Thus, Vancouver schools must make major provision for teaching English as a second language.

Two other factors, the aging and mobility of the population, are noteworthy. The most rapidly growing age group is that between 25 and 40 which is predicted to increase by 44% between 1976 and 1983 for a total of 779,000 or 38% of the population. This group is the traditional market for distance education. On the matter of mobility, data more recent than the 1971 census are unavailable. These data show that one-fifth of the population had changed municipality of residence between 1966 and 1971. In the same period almost 50 percent had changed dwelling places within their municipalities. Further, during the same period there were some 310,000 immigrants to B.C. with 63% coming from other provinces and the remainder from other countries. During the same period about 100,000 persons left B.C.

These population and demographic factors have obvious relevance for the design of a distance education institution.

1.3 Economy

The economy of British Columbia is strongly oriented toward the extraction and processing of basic resources. Forestry and mining, and to a lesser extent fishing and agriculture are the industries upon which the rest of the economy depends. Since most of the production of these primary industries is exported, the economic health of B.C. is heavily dependent on worldwide economic conditions.

Despite its fundamental importance, primary industry employs a diminishing fraction of the provincial labour force. Tertiary activities (transportation, finance, public service, etc.) employ an increasing portion of the rapidly growing work force (62% in 1971). Secondary industries (manufacturing and construction) have shown sporadic growth but politicians blame one another for the overall failure to encourage "value-added" components to primary products. To an unfortunate extent the same politicians have relied upon "mega-projects" (hydro electric dams and coal developments) to maintain economic vitality.

There appears to be a growing belief that the long term well-being of the province lies in the creation and application of high technology to all three industrial sectors. In this belief, of course, B.C. is not alone. Nevertheless, in contrast to some, it

has significant energy and natural resources as well as the necessary manpower though some would argue that B.C. has given too little attention to a variety of trades and professional training relying instead on immigrants who possess the needed skills.

1.4 Communications

Rugged terrain, sparse population and great distances combine to make the provision of surface transport difficult, costly and time consuming. The southern third of the province and Vancouver Island are served by a network of two-lane paved highways which are maintained for year round driving. Vancouver Island and the Mainland are linked by a fast, modern ferry fleet. Except for the southernmost portion, highways along the mainland coast do not exist because of the coastal fjords. Residents of coastal communities rely on seaplanes and, to a lesser extent, on watercraft. The north of the province has few roads and those that exist have been built to provide the infra-structure for economic development.

Rail transport for passengers is of relatively insignificant proportions. However, the 7,344 kilometres of main track are the major means by which grain and other raw materials are brought to tidewater from the prairie provinces and the interior of B.C.

Air transport within B.C. is the most feasible method for those to whom time and convenience are important factors. In 1976 the Vancouver airport handled 800,000 passengers inbound from and outbound to B.C. destinations. In addition, passengers, mail and freight can reach all major centres in about two hours or less.

Personal communication whether by telephone, telex or radio telephone, are almost universally available and reliable. In 1980, 71 telephones were available to each 100 of population.

Broadcast radio and television are widely available by means of air, cable, repeater stations or some combination of these. In general, however, the numbers of channels or stations available to the viewer or listener is inversely proportional to the individual's distance from Vancouver. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation provides the only near universal service in both radio and television. The recent launch of Canada's Anik-C satellite coupled with rapid progress in dish-receiver technology will likely cause a dramatic increase in viewing and listening options for residents in remote areas of B.C. This factor will, of course, improve access to television signals from the B.C. government's Knowledge Network.

NOTE: Factual data for this section on British Columbia were taken from selected publications of the government of British Columbia and from A.L. Farley, Atlas of British Columbia, University of B.C. Press, 1979.

2. The Educational System of British Columbia

Education is a provincial responsibility in Canada. The federal government plays only an indirect role by assisting in the financing of trades training, universities, loans to students and research.

The Provincial Legislative Assembly has ultimate responsibility for the financing and governance of education. At present, the direction of education is shared by two cabinet ministers. The Minister of Education directs affairs in schools, colleges and institutes. The Minister of Universities, Science and Communications has responsibility for universities.

2.1 School System

The province is divided into 75 school districts each with its elected Board of School Trustees. In 1981 485,628 pupils were enrolled in kindergarten (age 5) through grade 12 (age 18 approx.) and 29,156 teachers (1981) provided instruction and other professional services. Education is compulsory until age 15. No fees are charged. Two major categories of schools are provided - elementary (kindergarten through grade 7) and secondary (grades 8 to 12). All secondary schools are "comprehensive", providing programs in academic, trades and clerical areas. Approximately (90%) of pupils graduate from secondary school.

It has been government policy for many years to equalize educational opportunity throughout the province particularly in small, remote or less wealthy communities. It has achieved this largely by ensuring that all school districts can offer the province's basic education program irrespective of local wealth as reflected in taxable values of land and property. To a lesser but still important extent, the Correspondence Education Branch of the Ministry of Education offers high quality courses to pupils unable to attend schools and to pupils attending schools with limited curricula.

2.2 Colleges and Institutes

B.C. has 15 community colleges and 6 provincial institutes. This is a dramatic increase from 1964 when the first college was established in Vancouver. Some would say that the system has grown too quickly, placing colleges in communities too small to sustain them. Certainly, current financial restraint is forcing the government to find a new operational definition of equal educational opportunity throughout the province. It appears that the very small colleges which are invariably in small communities have been attempting to offer too broad a programme to too few students. Per student costs are unacceptably high.

Colleges and institutes, though governed by the same legislation and funding bodies, differ in significant ways.

Colleges address the educational needs of regions by offering three major programs: an academic program of two years which enables students to transfer to the third year of a baccalaureate program at a university; one or two year programs in vocational and technical training which give entry to occupations; continuing education courses which cater to a great variety of vocational or personal interests. Institutes, on the other hand, address province-wide concerns by offering relatively homogeneous programs such as technologies, trades training, fine arts, public safety and maritime training. Some overlap occurs between the programmes of colleges and institutes but this is held in check by funding mechanisms of some complexity and arbitrariness.

Though an institute in the sense that its potential clientele is province-wide, the Open Learning Institute is responsible for offering courses and programmes similar to those found in colleges, institutes and universities. This somewhat anomalous situation has led to a number of problems which will be described later.

Each college and institute is governed by a lay board. Some college board members are appointed by school boards in the region but a majority are appointed by the Minister of Education (technically, by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council). All institute board members are appointed by the Minister. Boards are unicameral, dealing with both management and academic matters. In this respect, these boards differ from the boards of governors of universities who make management decisions, leaving academic matters to senates.

Boards do not deal directly with the Minister on financial and programme matters. Instead, they must deal with three funding councils each somewhat reminiscent of the University Grants Commission in the United Kingdom. These councils receive budget proposals from the 21 institutions, collate them and pass them to the Minister, usually reducing them in the process. In due course, the legislature votes funds, usually in a further reduced amount, and the Minister informs the councils of their respective allocations. Again in due course, each council informs the institutions of the funds available to them. Two councils, each made up of Minister-appointed laymen, deal with programme areas - one for trades and vocations, the other for academics and technologies. The third council, made up of the 21 board chairmen, deals with facility, management and service costs. This funding procedure is exceedingly cumbersome, complex, costly and time-consuming. It is a source of frustration to all institutions but is particularly awkward and burdensome to the Open Learning Institute for reasons which may be obvious but will be elucidated later.

2.3 Universities

B.C. has three publicly supported universities and one private institution which has recently been granted the right to award baccalaureate degrees. The University of British Columbia (UBC) was established in 1915 and Simon Fraser University (SFU) and the University of Victoria (UVic) in 1963. All three universities are located in the heavily populated south-west corner of the province. All three have strong research programmes and offer doctoral as well as junior degrees. But only UBC can claim "multiuniversity" status which, in North American parlance, means that it has a full range of professional programmes (dentistry, medicine, pharmacy, law, etc.).

Each university has a board of governors and a senate with the former having responsibility for management and fiscal matters and the latter for academic affairs. The budget requests of the universities are reviewed and modified by the Universities Council, a body similar in function to the Universities Grants Commission in the United Kingdom. The Minister of Universities, Science and Communications receives budget requests from the Council, moneys are voted in the Legislative Assembly and, in due course, funds are allocated to the universities by the Council. Negotiation and argument occur at each stage of the budget process and, as might be expected, the universities seldom express satisfaction with the result. In general, however, the universities appear to have been fairly well-treated and the overall funding process is far less cumbersome than that for colleges and institutes.

The Open Learning Institute receives a portion of its funding on the recommendation of the Universities Council and thus has the unenviable task of preparing and defending budget submissions for this council as well as the three councils which deal with college and institute budgets. It is the only post secondary institution which competes for funds with all the other 23 institutions.

2.4 Post Secondary Enrolments

How many students are engaged in post-secondary education in B.C.? The answer one receives to this apparently straight-forward question depends on the definition of "student". The following brief explanation will assist the reader in understanding the somewhat unusual dynamics of the B.C. system.

Full-time enrolment is the total number of students taking a "full" programme. Thus, if a university student takes a "full" programme each successive term he will complete a B.A. in four academic years. Part-time enrolment is the total number of students taking less than "full" programmes. Since part-time students will differ in the fraction of a full programme they take, the same part-time enrolment, reported by two different institutions, could reflect quite different teaching loads for the institutions. Head-count enrolment is the total number of

students enrolled, whether full or part-time. Full-time equivalent enrolment is the total number of "full" programmes taken by students, whether full- or part-time. Thus, if an institution reports 10,000 part-time students, and if the students, on average, take one-half of a full programme, the full-time equivalent enrolment will be 5,000.

The foregoing description may seem overly detailed and complex. But it is of more than academic interest because the grant to an institution is based, in large measure, on the teaching load the institution undertakes. If, for example, Institution A reports a head count of 20,000 students, all of whom are full-time, its full-time equivalent enrolment is 20,000. In contrast, Institution B might report a similar head-count but all its students are part-time enrolees all taking one-fifth of "full" programmes for a full-time equivalent enrolment of 4,000. All things being equal, Institution A would receive a grant five times that of Institution B.

TABLE 1

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION ENROLMENTS IN B.C. (1980)*

	Head Count		Full-Time		Part-Time	
	Enrolment	%Incs 80/79	Enrolment	%Incs 80/79	Enrolment	%Incs 80/79
Universities	46,604	5.0%	32,353	2.5%	14,251	11.2%
Colleges and Institutes	48,888	11.6%	17,647	5.8%	31,241	15.2%
Total	95,492	8.3%	50,000	3.6%	45,492	13.9%

* Enrolment information in this table and in section 2.4 is taken from:

M.J. Weldon, Trend Analysis of Enrolments and Participation Percents in British Columbia Post-Secondary Education 1967-1980, Report #37, The British Columbia Post-Secondary Education Enrolment Forecasting Committee, Vancouver, 1981.

Table I displays certain enrolment data for 1980, the most recent year for which complete data are available. As can be seen, head-count enrolments are approaching 100,000 for the post-secondary system with an almost equal division between full-time and part-time

students. The full to part-time enrolment ratios are approximately 2:1 for universities and 1:2 for colleges and institutes. The overall participation rate of the 18-44 age group is about 8%. 1979 to 1980 percentage increases favour the colleges and institutes in all categories.

Longer term trends in the various categories of students (1967-1980) permit the following generalizations:

1. Overall head count enrolment increased from 37,000 to 95,000 between 1967 and 1980. The participation rate of the 18-44 group has increased from 5.5% to 8%.

2. University head-count enrolment increased by 50% between 1967 and 1980. College and institute enrolments increased by 800% but it must be remembered that the majority of these institutions were not established until 1969 or later.

3. University full-time enrolments increased by 23% during this period although since 1975, these enrolments have remained almost constant. In the same period college and institute full-time enrolments increased over four-fold but the caveat in 2 above should be noted. Again, since 1975 this category of enrolment has remained fairly constant increasing by only 18%.

4. University part-time enrolments increased over three-fold but the majority of the increase has occurred since 1973. College and institute part-time enrolment has grown over ten-fold (again, bear in mind the caveat in 2 above). Since 1973 annual increases in part-time students have been in the order of 15%.

5. As noted above overall participation rates for the 18-44 age group increased from 5.5% to 8% during the period in question. However, the 18-24 age group participation rate declined slightly during the same period (14.9% to 14.2%). For universities the decline was significant (13% to 9%). For colleges and institutes the gain was significant (from 2% to 5%). There has been little relative change in the last 5 years.

A number of conclusions relevant to the operation of a distance education institution (OLI) can be drawn from the foregoing.

1. Full-time enrolments at the 23 campus-style institutions as well as the participation rate of their "traditional" age group (18-24) are relatively stable. This factor coupled with the recent increase in the availability of training options suggests that there is little pent-up demand for full-time studies within the 18-24 age group. Accordingly, OLI should not look for significant enrolments from this group.

2. Part-time enrolments and enrolments from the 25-44 age group are increasing rapidly. At least a portion of these two growth factors is accounted for by the colleges which have joined the system most recently: these are all in remote or sparsely populated regions. The relevant point is this: older, part-time, isolated students are a major part of the "traditional" market for distance education and this group, at least in part, is being served by campus institutions.

3. The Open Learning Institute - Early Considerations

3.1 Origins and Purpose

The period from 1960-1975 was one of unprecedented expansion in post-secondary education in B.C. In 1960 the province had one post-secondary institution, the University of B.C. (UBC) in Vancouver with its affiliated two-year college in Victoria. By 1975 the system consisted of three universities, 14 community colleges and three specialized institutes. (A small denominational university in the province's interior was also in existence in 1975 but has since ceased to function.)

This expansion resulted in part from population growth but, more important, from educational, political and social considerations. Educationally, the government had been persuaded by the then President of U.B.C., J.B. MacDonald, that his institution could no longer meet the province's needs for trained manpower. Taking the California system as his model, he argued for the creation of two new universities and a network of regional community colleges. Politically, the government was under pressure from residents of the interior of the province who had long rankled under the "imperial" status of Vancouver. The creation of several regional colleges decreased this pressure. Socially, the government, particularly the New Democratic Party which was in power from 1972-1975, believed in the ability of senior educational institutions to assist in redressing a variety of social ills. As a consequence all institutions were actively encouraged to reach out into adjacent and remote communities.

By 1975 there was increasing agreement that few if any population centres were capable of supporting additional colleges. There was even some concern that certain of the newer colleges were in centres too small to warrant the offering of a reasonable range of programmes at other than excessive cost. There were periodic expressions of interest in the creation of a fourth public university at one of the major interior centres but most agreed that this would be a costly and problematical venture. Various special interest groups, including the existing institutions, argued for the addition of this or that service or facility. It was time to do the planning and thinking which had too frequently been ignored during the recent period of headlong growth.

By 1977 the Minister of Education (then responsible for schools, colleges and universities) had received five major commission or committee reports.* Two of these reports, that of the Distance Education Planning Group and that of the Commission on University Programmes in Non-Metropolitan Areas, (Winegard Report) foreshadowed certain functions of the future Open Learning Institute but neither visualized the institution which emerged.

* Ministry of Education, Commission on University Programmes in Non-Metropolitan Areas, Victoria, 1976.

Ministry of Education, Report of the Commission on Vocational, Technical, and Trades Training in British Columbia, Victoria, 1977.

Ministry of Education, Report of the Committee on Continuing and Community Education in British Columbia, Victoria, 1976.

Ministry of Education, Report of the Adult Basic Education Committee, Victoria, 1977.

Ministry of Education, Report of the Distance Education Planning Group on a Delivery System for Distance Education in British Columbia, Victoria, 1977.

The Winegard Report recommended against the creation of a fourth university but urged that the three universities and particularly Simon Fraser University be asked to devise ways of providing academic programmes for the interior. Distance education was recommended as one important means by which university courses could be delivered. The report was thoughtful and analytical but its recommendations were not overly specific.

In contrast, the Distance Education Planning group recommended "that a new educational institute or agency be designated as the provincial agency responsible for the development of distance educaton and delivery systems." (P3) In addition, it recommended "the acquisition of educational (TV) channels," "participation in...satellite experiments", "further planning...and pilot programmes...to evaluate alternative delivery modes." In brief, the Planning Group displayed great interest in communications technology but paid very little attention to and displayed little awareness of the difficult and costly problems of programme, course and software development. Further, in suggesting that "the proposed institute should operate primarily as a utiity agency supporting the post-secondary education system by providing centralized services in the distance education field" (p98), the Planning Group demonstrated its lamentable ignorance of the problems inherent in developing productive relationships with face-to-face colleges and universities for whom distance education would stand well down a list of priorities.

Independent of but coincidental with the preparation of these various reports, the minister was becoming aware of the nature and potential of distance education. Visits to Vancouver by Dr. Walter Perry (now Lord Perry of Walton), Vice-Chancellor of the Open University, and a subsequent return visit to The Open University by the minister, Dr. Patrick McGeer, and his deputy, Dr. Walter Hardwick, convinced the minister that distance education need not be the academic inferior of traditional approaches. Similarly, visits to Texas and Massachusetts made him aware of the potential of existing and emerging communications technologies.

During the summer and fall of 1977, the universities and colleges were actively engaged in developing proposals designed in one way or another to address the deficiencies in the system identified by the five reports mentioned earlier. Each university, for example, proposed methods of dealing with the recommendations concerning the need for university programmes in non-metropolitan areas. Each, in turn, offered vigorous criticisms of the other proposals. In the meantime, the college principals were preparing the design of an "Open College" which would use distance education methods to deliver pre-baccalureate and non-academic courses and programmes.

The government's intention was finally made clear in the speech from the throne delivered in January 1978 to the spring sitting of the legislature. In the cryptic and non-specific language typical of throne speeches, the government announced that it would shortly announce the establishment of a new institution which would meet unmet educational needs in a variety of programme areas and would offer instruction by distance education methods.

Public response to this announcement was restrained but generally positive. In contrast, the response of the post-secondary institutions was critical. There were claims that the minister had deceived the institutions by encouraging the development of alternative plans which now had to be abandoned. There were concerns that, in funding the new institution, the minister would withdraw funds from existing institutions. The universities accused the minister of showing insufficient concern for academic quality and of creating a new de-facto university without adequate consultation.

On April 11, 1978 the Minister clarified government intent in a speech to the legislature. "We believe that the Open Learning Institute..., which in its offerings will span the pedagogical range from basic vocational and up-grading courses to senior academic studies, is the vehicle which will complete our policy of decentralizing post-secondary educational and training opportunities in British Columbia." He went on to describe the basic structure of the proposed institute, to express his wish to avoid "wasteful duplication of effort and resources" through cooperation and collaboration, to note the undoubted quality of certain distance teaching materials and, finally, to enumerate

some of the "formidable problems that will have to be resolved..." which included high quality, easy transfer of credits and avoidance of competition. He concluded by stating that "this government is committed to the creation of the Open Learning Institute." (Hansard, April 11, 1978)

On June 1, 1978 the Open Learning Institute (OLI) was established and its board named by order-in-council. On the same date, the minister, in accordance with statute, provided the institute with a mission statement. Subsequently, the Universities Act was amended to give OLI the legal right to offer undergraduate degrees in arts and science. (Copies of these four founding documents are provided in the Appendix to this report.) On June 5, 1978 the board of the institute met in Vancouver under the temporary chairmanship of the deputy minister. At this meeting the board named James S. Pritchard of Prince George as chairman, appointed Dr. John F. Ellis as principal and agreed to seek his secondment from Simon Fraser University. Dr. Ellis had recently been Dean of Education at SFU and had participated in the founding of both SFU and Capilano Community College. During the spring of 1978 he had been a consultant to the minister on matters related to the founding of OLI.

3.2 Internal and External Governance

The Colleges and Provincial Institute Act set out the general internal governance structure for all colleges and institutes and its requirements apply to OLI. OLI's nine member board, appointed by order-in-council, is answerable to the minister for all aspects of the operation of the institute. Board members, though not formal representatives of specific interest groups, are selected to make the board as a whole reflective of the great variety of interests which OLI is intended to serve. Though the board has jurisdiction over both management and instructional programmes, it is required to seek advice on programme matters from three programme advisory committees which it appoints; university, career - technical, and adult basic education.

The board is required to appoint a principal who is the institute's chief executive officer. Since the OLI board from the outset has seen itself as a policy board rather than a board of management, the principal occupies a key role in assisting the board in developing clear and effective policies and in executing policies once they are approved. The respective roles of board and chief executive officer are never completely clear-cut in any organization but in OLI's case role definition came quickly and effectively if not always painlessly. This was because of the generally high level of experience of all participants and the desire of all to see OLI succeed in its mission.

Initially, the principal chose an organizational structure which was non-hierarchical: all seven programme and operational directors reported directly to him. Overall internal coordination

was achieved by regular meetings of all senior members of the organization who were known internally as the 3M Company - Monday Morning Meeting. The broad span of control which the Principal chose to exercise created a heavy work load but it had the enormous advantage of speeding decision making. As OLI gained momentum the principal narrowed his span of control and the organizational structure became pyramidal in shape. The current structure is described in Section 4.

As noted above, external governance resides ultimately in the minister and, of course, the legislature. Operationally, the minister relies on his senior officials to advise him on policy direction and to carry out existing policies as they relate to institutions. Initially, this created some difficulties for OLI because, aside from the deputy minister, ministry officials had not been intimately involved with the events which led up to the creation of OLI and subsequently had not been well-briefed either on the minister's intentions or on the implications of distance education. To illustrate one point of awkwardness, one official denied OLI's request for warehouse space for storage of materials on the grounds that the amount of space requested exceeded that provided to face-to-face institutions. Nevertheless, despite such misunderstandings and with the deputy minister's assistance, OLI was able to obtain reasonably satisfactory funding and operating space.

But another external force started to play an unintended but intrusive role in external governance of OLI and the other colleges and institutes. A new act, the Colleges and Provincial Institute Act, had come into force just before the establishment of OLI. This statute called for the establishment of three councils, Management Advisory Council (MAC), Occupational Training Council (OTC) and Academic Council (AC). These councils had the function of recommending levels of funding in their areas of programme or administrative jurisdiction to the minister and allocating to institutions funds received from him. This funding model, based on Britain's University Grants Committee, was intended to place institutions at arms length from government. The Universities Council (UCBC) was already in place and had the same intended function for the province's universities.

The councils undertook their duties with enthusiasm requiring of each institution high levels of detail and justification in budget submissions. Since budgets are based on programme intentions each institution had to develop overall programme goals, produce a budget reflective of these, and finally, disassemble goals and budget to match the jurisdictions of each council. This was a monolithic, artificial and frustrating exercise.

For OLI the budgeting process became, at times, a source of near despair. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, like the other colleges and institutes, its budget plan had to be broken down to meet the often conflicting needs of three councils (as

well as the ministry which funded Adult Basic Education costs directly). In addition, however, university programme requests had to be directed to the University Council. In all, five separate submissions were required. Second, OLI had to justify its submissions to five separate bodies some of whom had little knowledge of or sympathy for distance education. Further, the funding bodies in attempting to be consistent in their treatment of all institutions applied standards to OLI which were inappropriate.

The board and the officials at OLI looked with some envy at the less complex funding mechanisms of the Open University which justified its needs directly to government and not through an intermediary agency, (the UGC), let alone through five agencies.

3.3 Students, Programmes and Curricula

In his speech of April 11, 1978 to the Legislature the minister had stated that OLI's purpose was to meet "unmet (educational) need." In his mission statement of June 1, 1978 he specified the programmes to be offered by OLI to meet this need. These were programmes leading to a first degree in arts and science; programmes in career, technical and vocational areas; and programmes in adult basic education. Thus, it became the task of the institute first to identify the nature of the unmet need and then to design the three programmes intended to meet that need.

It was decided at the outset not to undertake a formal needs assessment study. It was felt that this would be expensive, time-consuming and of questionable validity as earlier experience at the Open University and elsewhere had shown. Instead, the planning group used the five reports mentioned earlier in this section, data on enrolment patterns from the Ministry and from other B.C. institutions, census and other public data and coupled these with their own fairly extensive knowledge of the province. The principal also commissioned a series of "Background Papers" on a number of relevant questions and issues. Upon examination and analysis of these data sources, a number of tentative but supportable conclusions emerged concerning potential students and their likely needs within the three programme areas.

In respect of individuals who might enrol in adult basic education programmes, 1971 census data showed that almost 380,000 B.C. residents over 15 years of age (24% of the age group) had <u>not</u> completed nine years of schooling. Even allowing for the fact that the figure could be reduced by subtracting certain numbers of over age school attenders and most very elderly provincial residents a large pool of potential students remained. Further, some 25,300 adults had been enrolled in basic education studies during 1976-77. Of these, about 7,000 were enrolled in correspondence courses offered by the Ministry of Education's Correspondence Education Branch. It appeared that most of the 25,300 enrolees sought a high school graduation diploma (Grade 12)

or its equivalent, a lesser but still significant number sought a qualification that would admit them to trades training (Grade 10), and a relatively small number sought (or were being encouraged to seek) skills at a pre-high school level. The planning group, thus, concluded the following: a large pool of potential students existed; high school (Grade 12) completion would likely be a major goal and Grade 10 completion a minor goal for the group who would enrol. Since adult students had enrolled in distance education programmes even when the teaching materials had been designed primarily for school age students it was likely that even more would enrol when materials more appropriate to their age and interests were available.

Specific data in respect of individuals who might enrol in university degree programmes were more elusive though considerable general information was available. For example, hearings of the Winegard Commission had been told that "numerous" residents of the interior of the province had, for a variety of reasons, moved from the coastal region before completing their degrees. It was claimed that the availability of senior undergraduate courses would help them satisfy their ambitions for degree completion. Further, it had been established that a substantial fraction (perhaps as high as 90%) of individuals who took university transfer courses at the colleges subsequently failed to transfer their credits to a university. It could be assumed quite reasonably that some portion of these had simply been unable to relocate at or near a university in order to continue their studies. It was also assumed that additional candidates would emerge from among the traditional categories of distance education students: persons with family or work responsibilities, the geographically or socially isolated, the physically disabled. An earlier study undertaken for the Universities Council had concluded that perhaps 2,000 students would enrol in distance university education. Experience at Athabasca University in Alberta suggested that this estimate was not unreasonable. Taking all this into account, the planning group concluded that: a pool of potential applicants existed; initially, at least, senior undergraduate courses would likely be in higher demand than introductory courses; and students would likely wish to transfer credits taken elsewhere to OLI and could well wish to transfer OLI credits to other institutions.

In respect of individuals who might enrol in career, vocational and technical programmes specific data and helpful information were almost totally absent. There was a widespread belief that training needs in this programme area were very great indeed. In fact, two of the reports mentioned earlier (...Distance Education Planning Group..., ...Vocational, Technical and Trades Training...) made that very point but from quite different perspectives. The former stated, on the basis of a modest survey of informants, that upgrading even more than "front-end" training was an urgent priority. However, it avoided a more specific recommendation by concluding that "There is a critical need to

bring together officials from government, industry, labour and professional associations to identify needs and set priorities..." (p.60). In contrast, the latter report, while not ignoring certain training needs, devoted most of its energies to such structural aspects of the training system as governance, jurisdiction, coordination and funding in the belief that these changes would increase training opportunities.

When the planning group examined the relevant programmes being offered by the colleges and by the two specialized institutes with responsibilities in this area, they found programme formats and sequences rather narrowly focussed and hidebound. For example, students, usually in 15's or 30's enrolled in set sequences of courses and moved enbloc through the sequence. If a course in, say, accounting, business English or physics was required in each of two sequences, it would be taught twice often under different course titles.

Questions of governance, jurisdiction, coordination and funding were even more vexing. To illustrate, two provincial ministries, Labour and Education, both had responsibilities in apprenticeship training and each seemed bent on gaining control. There were less serious problems with management and labour both of whom had roles to play in admission to and provision of training. But labour had gained virtual control of which and how many students would be admitted to trades training. These and other anomalies and difficulties confronted the planning group who concluded as follows: a substantial need for both "front-end" and upgrading training existed; some existing programmes could be offered in whole by distance means, others in part and still others, probably not at all; there was little point in following the advice of the distance education planning group in attempting to seek unanimity from competing and often hostile groups; and finally, OLI should search for a new curricular model which would be amenable to distance teaching method alone, which emphasized generic rather than narrowly specialized subject matter, which had the best fit possible with other existing curricula. This last conclusion which became a charge to the new Director of Career, Technical and Vocational Programmes (CTV) was a tall order. The curricular shape which emerged within a year will be described later. It came close to meeting the specified conditions.

Having made a reasoned estimate of potential student numbers and needs, the staff turned its attention to programme design and curriculum. A variety of options was examined within each of the three programme areas. Each had strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages. Out of this analysis emerged four operating principles which seemed appropriate both for a new distance education institution and for the provincial context within which it would function. Firstly, given the mobility of the population in general and of students in particular, OLI course credits should transfer readily to the programmes of other institutions and OLI programmes should readily accept course credits from other institutions. Secondly, OLI nomenclature in

course titles, programme designations, certificates, degrees, etc. should be as similar as possible to those already in use. It was felt that the coining of new labels would simply exacerbate the problems students were already experiencing in attempting to communicate their educational achievements to employers and other institutions. Thirdly, OLI operations, whenever possible, should fit established practices in B.C. To illustrate, academic terms normally commence in September, January and May and individual courses tend to be offered in four month (semester) modules. Finally, OLI should develop or acquire the least possible number of courses consistent with adequate content coverage in given programmes. Optional courses should be avoided and generic courses (serving the needs of several programmes) should be developed.

These four operating principles, though essentially conservative in flavour, had now to be imbedded in various programmes. But the programmes, through their constituent courses, would be delivered by distance education means - a radical methodology for some.

Two Adult Basic Education programmes (ABE) emerged from the planning process, the Grade Ten Completion Programme and the Grade Twelve Completion Programme. The former, if successfully completed, would result in the award of a diploma of the same name. The latter would result in the award of the Dogwood Certificate, the same certificate awarded by the ministry to adults who completed grade 12. The grade ten programme would consist of four courses (English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies) based on the high school curriculum. These courses met the requirements for admission to trades training and each could be offered in semester length format. The Dogwood Certificate on the other hand, required seven senior level courses two of which had to be English and Mathematics. The remaining five courses were chosen on the basis of adult preference as determined by the enrolment figures of the ministry's Correspondence Education Branch. Each of the seven courses could be offered under the semester format. Once these eleven ABE courses had been developed consideration could be given to adding optional courses. The overall design of the two ABE programmes appeared to meet the requirements of the operating principles set forth earlier.

(NOTE: A description of terminology and university degree structure is provided in Appendix (X). Readers who are unfamiliar with this part of the North American "Language" may find it useful to read the appendix before continuing with the text.)

The first major decision made by the group planning the university degree programme was that the semester format was a good "fit" with the four guiding principles enunciated earlier. For similar reasons the group decided that course titles based upon disciplines such as psychology, economics and biology would be preferable to broad topic or theme titles such as those to be found in the Open University and elsewhere. These two decisions effectively ruled out the use of Open University

multi-disciplinary courses unless they could be broken up into several smaller courses with a disciplinary designation attached.

The next phase in planning involved what amounted to an armchair exercise in simple arithmetic. The following assumptions were made: courses would be of semester length; each would carry three semester hours of credit; four courses would be required at the lower division in each discipline; ten courses would be required for a major or five for a minor; the courses necessary for a reasonable array of discipline areas would be in place in five years; courses could be developed or acquired at the optimistic rate of fifteen to twenty per year or 75-100 in five years; and finally, the requirement of a major would be 14 courses per discipline (4 lower division and 10 upper division); the requirement of a minor would call for 9 courses (4 lower division and 5 upper division). The simple arithmetic showed that between 5 and 7 discipline majors or between 8 and 10 discipline minors could be in place in five years if all assumptions were met. Obviously the numbers would be reduced if course development rates failed to meet assumed rates.

Thus, the question became: Should the degree permit a high level of specialization in very few disciplines or a lesser level of specialization in more disciplines or should a non-specialized structure be devised? The last option was rejected because attempts elsewhere to creat such a degree had not been popular with students, in part, because it was unfamiliar and, in part, because it made admission to graduate programmes difficult. The first option was rejected because it would offer too narrow a range of disciplinary choice to prospective students. The final choice, the requirement of two minor concentrations for graduation, appeared to be the best match for the assumptions and operating guidelines established earlier.

The final planning phase addressed three further considerations. The disciplines to be included in the curriculum were chosen largely on the basis of student preference as reflected in the enrolment patterns in B.C. colleges and universities. Secondly, the content of the initial minimum of the nine courses in each discipline was outlined. And finally, rules, regulations and procedures concerning a variety of detailed matters were prepared.

Planning for the Career, Technical and Vocational Programme (CTV), by reasons of the conditions described earlier, proved to be difficult, complex and frustrating. Though excellent training was being provided by several institutions, the overall area lacked the traditions, norms, patterns and coordination of high school and university studies. Further, the majority of programmes (almost exclusively employment entry programmes) required full-time attendance and permitted no student choice within the pre-ordained sequences. Finally, though considerable effort was being paid to upgrading, course offerings lacked cohesion and predictability.

A number of decisions were taken at this point. Firstly, OLI courses and programmes should be directed initially to upgrading needs but not to the total exclusion of front-end needs. Secondly, students should be offered two general alternatives: a free choice of courses (with advice available) that would permit the attainment of personal or vocational goals of a student's devising; or predetermined sequences of courses (with some options permitted) each of which would carry a readiy understood designation (eg. small business management). Third, students should be awarded OLI certificates upon the successful completion of ten, semester length courses and these should be either General (student choice) or Designated (OLI prescribed) Certificates. Fourthly, whenever possible, individual courses should fit a number of certificate programmes. Fifthly, for the time being, OLI should steer clear of awkward jurisdicational problems such as those found in trades training. Finally, OLI should seek out and foster joint ventures and collaborative arrangements with industry and the other educational institutions.

To put all of the foregoing planning activities into perspective a number of additional points should be added. First of all, the basic structures just described had been created in a very short time - from June 1978 to March 1979. Secondly, the description barely hints at the array of documentation, consultation, argumentation and so forth that was required to transform a general idea into a board approved policy. Thirdly, the planning group was very small in number consisting of five members from August to December 1978 and a further four commencing January 1, 1979. Fourthly, programme planning was only one activity, albeit the most important, demanding the time and effort of OLI staff - a budget had to be prepared, facilities acquired, senior staff searched for and appointed, public and private bodies addressed and lobbied, etc. Finally, coupled with the minister's support and encouragement was his exuberant impatience and not always private prodding.

3.4 Course Development, Delivery and Support

In the previous section we described the considerations from which the overall curriculum plan of the three programme areas emerged. In this section we will describe the initial procedures and structures for course development, course delivery, and course and student support together with some of the considerations which produced them.

Throughout the planning process, OLI took careful note of the practices and procedures developed by other distance education institutions, notably Britain's Open University and Athabasca University in the Province of Alberta. The heads of these two institutions, Vice-Chancellor Walter Perry and President Sam Smith, together with their senior officials, gave advice and provided information, all with considerable candour. As a consequence, OLI officials were intimately aware of the successes

and problems experienced elsewhere. In addition, of course, they were simultaneously increasing the precision of their knowledge of the unique constraints and opportunities of the B.C. context and the OLI mission.

Thus, and speaking generally, the planning objectives could be stated as follows: to develop procedures and structures uniquely suited to the B.C. context which were copied or adapted from successful experience elsewhere and, as necessary, to devise new arrangements which avoided or corrected shortcomings experienced elsewhere.

In respect of course development, it was decided, given the potential array of subject matter in the three programme areas, not to hire course writers (discipline experts) on a continuing basis but to contract on a short-term basis with acknowledged experts in particular subjects to provide course materials. Full time course designers were hired by OLI to provide design, editing and pedagogical assistance. In addition, a course consultant for each course was to be retained, under contract, to pass judgement on and lend his name to the course materials. Course designers would work simultaneously with several course writers and consultants. OLI also hired persons with specialized skills in graphics, editing, audio production, copyright clearance and word processing.

Given the fact that the printed word would be the major vehicle for course transmission (with audio and video as adjuncts where educationally necessary and possible) and given the ambitious course preparation schedule which was visualized, a number of decisions on format and production equipment became necessary. It was decided that printed materials for individual courses would be divided into several units, individually produced. Units would be printed in black and white, centre-stapled and on 8-1/2" x 11" paper. Unit booklets would be three-hole punched to fit standard binders. These decisions, it was believed, would yield attractive, "clean" appearing materials, well-suited to short and flexible press runs and at substantial savings over three-colour, perfect-binding processes.

A state of the art Wang word processing and computer type-setting system was judged to be suitable to handle the volume of copy which was anticipated and was appropriate to editing and format needs. A high speed press was acquired, though it was recognized that the expected volume of printing could not be handled entirely in-house.

Warehousing and delivery of course materials posed fewer fundamental problems than course development and materials production. Experience gained elsewhere was fairly readily transferable. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of detailed organization was required. Systems for acquiring commercially published books, methods of inventory control, mail containers for course packages, and mail room procedures all had to be devised.

Yet, numerous irritating and time consuming problems emerged during the initial phase, in part because of cramped quarters, and in part because insufficient time had been set aside for training staff in the integration of related functions.

Very considerable thought was given to the question of student support services. These were seen to be of two kinds: general support services which included academic programme advice, registration and record-keeping, and assistance with programme-related problems such as financial emergency; and course-specific support which included tutoring, remediation, feedback and the like. Given the geographic area to be served and the relatively small enrolments that could be expected in many courses, it was recognized that the rendering of support services face-to-face would have to be the exception rather than the rule. To attempt the creation of sufficient study centres or tutorial sites so that a centre would be within reasonable commuting distance of any potential student was a logistical and fiscal impossibility. Further, to place full-service centres in major centres would be to perpetuate the inequality of educational access between urban and rural populations, an inequity OLI was commissioned to help to eradicate.

Three major decisions were taken in the area of student support. Firstly, course-specific support would be provided by tutors who would communicate with students through the mails and by OLI funded telephone calls. The tutors would be encouraged to use the telephone actively rather than merely to respond to calls for help. Tutors would be hired under contract for the semester in question. Secondly, full-time advisors would be appointed. Their main function would be to provide advice on course and programme selection and, in general, to assist students with queries and problems related to their OLI activities. Their further functions would be to monitor the progress of an assigned group of students and to aid in the recruitment of students. At a later point, it was agreed, OLI should consider the establishment of regional offices each staffed by an advisor and a clerk. Thirdly, a Registrar's Office would be established to maintain records, oversee examinations, award credits, receive fees and perform other quasi-legal functions. Initially, at least, advisors and tutors would be under the general supervision of the Registrar.

One final matter engaged the attention of the OLI planners: the place of audio and, particularly, video in the delivery of OLI courses. Broadcast audio (radio) was technically impossible for two reasons. Firstly, the topography of B.C. made it impossible for a single transmission to reach more than a fraction of the population without the benefit of numerous repeater stations. Secondly, although the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) Radio covered virtually the entire province through its repeater network, its facilities were unavailable to OLI for constitutional

reasons: OLI is under provincial jurisdiction and the CBC is a federal agency. Accordingly, it was decided to include audio cassettes in course packages whenever there was reason to believe that audio materials would facilitate learning.

The resolution of the video issue was more complicated. In fact, it became so complex in its many ramifications that it would be impossible, given the prime purpose of this paper, to provide the reader with a comprehensive view of the matter. Political, educational, technical, pedagogical and personal issues were all involved. Nevertheless, the following brief exposition should provide the reader with some basis for understanding the issues, at least from the OLI perspective.

As was noted earlier, the minister and his deputy had developed a lively interest in distance education and, in particular, in the electronic communication systems which had already been or could be associated with it. The use of Canada's Anik B satellite combined with interactive television programming were sources of special interest. Further, as the minister responsible for science and technology as well as education, he had an obvious interest in technological developments. To OLI officials the minister's interests, at times, appeared to be more technological than educational. Further, he appeared to have a greater interest in what, in the future, would be technically feasible than in what, in the present, was operationally possible.

For their part, OLI planners, after extensive study, had concluded that it would be several years at least before a single TV transmission would be accessible to the majority of B.C. residents. In the meantime, it would be possible, through some combination of over-air and cable network, to reach residents of major population centres. Unfortunately, these were the citizens who already enjoyed reasonable levels of educational service whereas those who could not receive the signal (perhaps 30% of the population) were the very people who constituted the "unmet need" OLI had been established to serve. This 30% could be reduced to perhaps 10% by a costly system of providing video tapes to cable "head ends" in numerous small communities but even then many cable operators lacked the equipment to "air" the video tape. Further, assuming course enrolments of about thirty in many courses and recognizing that the enrolment would likely be spread over the entire province it appeared that the costs (variously defined) of providing video content would be prohibitive. Finally, experience elsewhere had demonstrated both that distance education could be offered successfully without T.V. and that where T.V. was a course component, it was seldom a pedagogical imperative.

Accordingly, it was concluded by the planners and agreed by the board that, for the time being, TV should not be an integral part of credit courses. Instead, it was agreed that OLI should obtain and transmit TV programmes and series of manifest technical and educational quality and that these should be offered under the

rubric of "continuing education" - a statutory requirement for all institutions. It was felt that this proposal would help the Minister honor his political commitment, it would help OLI establish a visible presence, it would "buy time" until improved technical capabilities became available, and it would be, in any case, a worthwhile contribution to the educational and cultural life of the province (see John F. Ellis, An Initial Programme Strategy for the Open Learning Institute, Background Paper 2/78, OLI, 1978). Funds for this venture were not, however, forthcoming; and any immediate involvement in TV by OLI was placed in abeyance. This was a major disappointment.

4. The Open Learning Institute - Present Status

In Section 3 we described the beginnings of OLI. In particular we outlined the assumptions and rationale which formed the basis for initial operations and procedures. In this section we provide considerable specific information on the operations and procedures which have emerged from those early beginnings. In addition, we note, where necessary, those elements of initial planning which have had to be modified in the light of experience and circumstances.

4.1. Curriculum

4.11 Courses Developed

Directors of the three programme areas (Adult Basic Education, University and Career/Technical/Vocational) were not appointed until early in 1979. Although the general nature and broad outline of the respective curricula had been decided before their arrival, more detailed specifications and arrangements demanded their involvement. Thus, the preparation of individual courses did not commence until May 1979.

Table (2) shows the number of courses, by programme area, which were delivered to students at the start of each academic year commencing with September 1979. During each academic year, additional courses became available for delivery at the start of the intervening semesters; but for simplicity's sake only September totals are shown.

TABLE 2

COURSES OFFERED FOR DELIVERY

	Sept 79	Sept 80	Sept 81	Sept 82	Sept 83
ABE					
Gr.X compl.	4	9	13	13	14
Gr.XII compl.	-	1	4	6	5
Other	-	-	2	2	3
Subtotal	4	10	19	21	22
UNIVERSITY					
Lower Div.	1	13	24	28	29
Upper Div.	2	13	9	12	13
Subtotal	3	26	33	40	42
CTV					
Subtotal	0	16	23	30	37
TOTAL	7	52	75	92	101

A number of observations can be made concerning the data contained in Table (2). First, the rate and magnitude of course development as reflected in the September to September totals represent a major achievement. Remembering that courses are of semester length (and thus smaller in compass than, say, a BOU course) and ignoring for the moment the question of course quality which will be discussed later in section 4.15, it is still fair to observe that the OLI curriculum has reached a significant level of maturity in a remarkably short time.

Second, the curriculum that has emerged has not departed significantly from the curriculum that was visualized during the initial planning phase (section 3.3). The ABE programmes (Grade X and XII completion) defined during the planning phase are substantially in place and, in fact, some additional optional courses are now available to students. The University Programme offerings will consist of 42 courses by September 1983, 13 courses at the lower division and 13 courses at the upper division. This comes close to realizing the initial plan which saw the need for 36 lower division and 54 upper division courses across 8 disciplines.

The 37 CTV courses, if taken in varying patterns, permit the attainment of a considerable number of certificates: 10 Designated Certificates (OLI specified courses) and a wide range of General Certificates.

4.12 Course Design and Development

It is the responsibility of the OLI Board to approve the overall curriculum, the individual courses within if, and the general regulations which govern it. Approval naturally takes into account the advice of OLI officials and the three programme advisory committees which report to the board.

It is also the responsibility of the Board to approve and seek funding for an annual budget. Funds for the development and revision of courses are specified within the budget. The planning budget is revised (typically downward) in the light of negotiations with the funding councils (See Section 3.2) and in accordance with funds provided by the legislature. At this point the annual budget is funded and the extent of course development for the ensuing year is known.

It then becomes the responsibility of senior administrative officers to ensure that planning goals are met. The Dean of Academic Affairs has the general oversight of course development and, once course materials have been developed, the Dean of Administration has the oversight of materials production, reproduction, warehousing and shipping.

The directors of the three programmes (ABE, University, CTV) report to the Dean of Academic Affairs and direct course development in their areas. In outline, their duties include the following: identifying and arranging for the appointment under contract of a well-qualified course writer and course consultant for each course; assigning a course designer to work with the course writer; specifying and monitoring a time line and budget for each course; granting approval, after appropriate consultation and, at specified stages, for subsequent steps to be undertaken. In addition to these duties concerning course development, programme directors are responsible for ensuring the revision and updating of courses, for identifying and specifying future developments in their programme areas, and for appointing and supervising course tutors.

Subject to all of the foregoing, the design and development of a given course is the responsibility of the course writer and the course designer. Their contributions are complementary with the course designer being expert in the generic concerns of subject presentation and materials development and the course writer being an expert in the subject matter of a given course. The course writer, frequently an employee of another institution, is hired on a fee for service basis for the course in question. The course

designer, on the other hand, is a regular employee of OLI and may be working simultaneously with several course writers. Though some have questioned OLI's practice of using temporary course writers for its failings in contributing to institutional continuity, the arrangement is not without merit. OLI officials argue, for example, that, given the range of subject matter that OLI programmes must address, it would be financially impossible to hire sufficient persons to reflect this.

Further, they observe, institutions whose policy calls for the appointment of resident course writers run two serious risks. Firstly, in order to utilize available course writers fully, required courses may be written by persons whose subject background may not be central or current to the subjects in question, and secondly, resident course writers may urge the development of courses central to their own academic interests but peripheral to the needs of the students and the curricular pattern of the institution.

All in all, the teaming of the talents of course writers and course designers seems to have worked well. There have been problems, of course, but these have usually been resolved without major incident. In several instances, for example, a course writer has had difficulty in fulfilling his contract either through pressure of other work or through failure to adapt to the distance format, or through differences in style and approach between writer and course designer. The programme director first attempts to mediate a problem but should this fail, a different course designer is assigned or the course writer's contract is terminated.

With the exception of a few disciplines, there has been little difficulty in finding appropriately qualified and experienced writers. In fact, an examination of their qualifications makes it clear that their subject competence is at least the equal of individuals teaching similar courses at parallel institutions - high schools, colleges or universities.

In contrast, the assembling of an adequate cadre of course designers has posed somewhat greater difficulty for OLI. For one thing, the skills required of a course developer are many and varied and, in combination, are not addressed in the training programmes of institutions of higher learning - at least in Canada. The desirable characteristics of a course developer - as OLI has defined the role - would include the following: a knowledge of relevant psychological, educational and pedagogical principles and the ability to apply them; the ability to write simple, clear English or, at least, the ability to recognize and encourage such writing; a knowledge of printing, graphics, audio production, etc. sufficient to work effectively with technical and production employees.

If training programmes for the development of these abilities do not exist, is it possible to "pirate" talent developed on-the-job by other distance education institutions? Again, Canadian sources of such talent are very few and immigration policies make its importation impossible.

Despite these formidable obstacles, OLI has now assembled a group of very effective course developers. Few were hired "ready made" for the job. But all possessed several of the abilities enumerated above and OLI has invested heavily in providing on the job training and assistance to help them round out their repertoire of skills.

Providing an institutional home for course developers has proved to be an awkward organizational problem. Should several course developers be part of the staff of each programme director or should all developers be housed in a division of course development and be seconded, as it were, to assist programme directors with specific courses? OLI tried first the one, then the other but recently decided that all course developers should be assigned to one or another of the programme divisions. The difficulties inherent in resolving this issue have resulted in considerable friction.

Another seemingly trivial problem has been that of settling upon an agreed title for the position. Editor, course editor, course designer, educational technologist and course developer have all been contemplated or used. Currently, it appears, course designers will be the title for this position for the foreseeable future. It is worth noting, parenthetically, that job titles and job descriptions require the careful and continuing attention of a personnel officer. They cannot be set in stone at the birth of an institution but must evolve as work flow systems develop and as size brings increasing specialization.

As has been noted, the course writer and course designer, with the facilitating and supervising efforts of the programme director, are major players in the development of a course. But they are not the only players. The course consultant and several technical experts also make important contributions.

The course consultant, a person in the same field as the course writer but, normally, more senior to him, is retained to attest and lend credibility to the academic merit of the course. Although the pedagogical and literary opinions of the consultant are taken into account, his academic judgements are fully respected. Minor differences of opinion between course writer and consultant are usually resolved with ease. Major differences may require the involvement of the programme director and even the Dean of Academic Affairs. Serious disputes which could not be resolved have resulted in buying out the contract of the course writer and not using the material he has produced. The course consultant is OLI's major agent of academic quality control.

The course writer and designer can call up a variety of specialized services from OLI staff and, where necessary, from outside the Institute. Experts on copyright clearance, graphics, layout, and audio production will, as required, provide consultations and advice and, where appropriate, tangible contributions. The course designer, naturally, plays the major role in liaising with these services, always with an eye to time schedules, work flows and budgets.

Word processing eases the burden of handling successive drafts of course material as they move from rough draft to camera ready copy. This procedure will be described as part of the following section.

4.13 Media and Methods

The printed word is the major medium of instruction but the course packages prepared for delivery show considerable variation in what they contain depending on the subject matter of the respective courses. Included in all are OLI produced course manuals and course units, all printed as separate booklets. Then, depending upon the course, packages will contain textbooks, books of readings, novels, pamphlets, audio tapes, business forms, electronic bits and pieces, etc.

The course manuals and units are produced by course writers and developers. Drafts of material are word processed and hard copy with a typescript face is produced for editing and revision. Following perhaps several revisions the course designer gives instructions on type face, style and size as well as spacing, and the copy is computer type set. Following further revisions and proof reading the copy goes to paste-up, graphics are inserted, pages are photographed onto plates and the copy is ready for printing.

Although this system was "state-of-the-art" when it was purchased in 1979 and is still functioning effectively, OLI is already being forced to consider new possibilities presented by the developing technology.

An explanation is in order concerning the practice of preparing several booklets (course manual and units) rather than a single larger volume. It is justified on the basis of cost, simplicity, flexibility in scheduling production, and ease in making later revisions. The booklets, which are printed in black and white, centre stapled and folded into 8-1/2" x 11" pages and 3-hole punched to fit a binder, are "clean" and attractive in appearance. Given relatively small course enrolments and the consequent short press runs it seems difficult to justify the introduction of more expensive formats such as those of Deakin University and the Open University.

Audio cassette tapes, produced and duplicated in the OLI sound studio, are used in a number of courses. Course packages in electronics contain circuit boards, components and measuring devices. A computing course supplies students with a microcomputer at a modest rent and this arrangement will soon be expanded across a complete computing science programme. CTV courses in typing require students to provide their own typewriter but include OLI prepared audio tapes for practice exercises.

Television plays only a minor role in OLI courses. In a few instances TV programmes have been carried by the provincial government's Knowledge Network; and the Institute is now beginning to enter the field of original TV production in a modest way.

4.14 Delivery System

The major delivery systems are the mails and the telephone withcourier services and bulk delivery to central depots playing a smaller role. But the increasing costs of mail service (particularly in the delivery of heavy course packages) plus the disastrous consequences of a mail strike have led to a search for alternatives. Some students who live close to an OLI regional office now take delivery of their course packages at that office which has earlier received a bulk freight shipment of packages. But finding a less costly and still reliable alternative to the mails is likely to be a continuing quest in such a large and sparsely settled province as British Columbia.

The telephone service is heavily used by tutors and students. OLI provides each tutor with a business phone and pays all charges. Tutors are encouraged to initiate calls to students when this would seem helpful and, of course, tutors receive calls from students at specified times and at no charge to the student. In addition, students who require library services not available in the local community can call toll-free to an OLI librarian whose office is in the Simon Fraser University Library and who has access to the university's collection on behalf of OLI students.

4.15 Course and Programme Quality

Those who work in distance education institutions must still be sensitive to issues of course and programme quality. Though critics of distance education, frequently university academics, feel little need to demonstrate the quality of their own instruction, they either assume the "inherent" inferiority of distance education or call for unreasonable demonstrations of its equality with campus education. Thus, the distance institution must be prepared to offer at least prima facie evidence of quality if for no other reason than to protect the legitimacy of the credentials it awards to its students.

It is easier today, of course, for a new distance institution like OLI to establish its credibility than it might have been a few years ago. A growing body of research evidence shows distance education to be the academic equal of that received on a campus. Perhaps more important, the Open University has convinced even the most skeptical that its courses and programmes are of very high quality.

What steps, then, has OLI taken to establish its quality and credibility? First, it is normal practice to hire as course writers, course consultants and tutors, only persons of similar qualification to those offering instruction at the same level in campus institutions. Thus, for example, since the Ph.D. is the normal qualification on the university campus, it is the normal qualification within OLI's university programme.

Second, OLI employs the principle of external validation, both formally and informally, in several ways. Course consultants attest to the quality of course content. The programme advisory committees includes members from conventional institutions and agencies. Suggestions and advice on hirings and new course offerings are actively sought and seriously considered. External examination of degree candidates is called for in OLI regulations though no degrees have yet been awarded.

Third, OLI devotes considerable effort to evaluation of its courses, programmes and systems. Tutors and students are requested to provide assessments of OLI performance. OLI course materials are systematically compared with those of other distance institutions. Examinations are administered under secure conditions in all courses - a difficult task given the geographical dispersion of students.

The foregoing, of course, are actions designed to achieve quality. But is there evidence that other institutions recognize the quality of OLI courses and programmes? The answer to this cannot be unequivocal but it is encouraging. OLI course credits are accepted for transfer credit by all provincial institutions. OLI course materials have been purchased in very significant quantities for use in B.C. colleges and in distance education institutions outside B.C. And, at a somewhat less tangible level, visitors to OLI from all over the world have remarked on the apparent quality of course materials and programmes.

4.2 Students

4.21 Enrolments

Enrolment data for the period 1979-1983 are presented in Table 3. Three points should be noted before examining the table. Firstly, enrolments shown are course enrolments, not student enrolments. Thus, a student who enrolled in five courses during an academic year would contribute five course enrolments to the table. Secondly, course enrolments for a given year are the total of the enrolments in the three semesters making up that year. A semester by semester breakdown would have made the table unwieldy and would have contributed little to the reader's understanding. Thirdly, the enrolment figures for the period September 1982 to August 1983 are in part an estimate because enrolment data beyond May 1983 were not known at the time of writing.

One additional note should be made at this point. It has already been indicated that, when the institute first began offering courses in September, 1979, the academic year was organised on a a continuous trimester basis with students being able to enter courses three times a year in September, January and May. Courses were thus four months long and examinations were set at the end of each four month period. It soon became obvious, however, that such a system was insufficiently flexible for a large number of students and potential students and that many would benefit from increasing the number of enrolment periods. Thus, in September, 1982, a new system was established. Students may now begin courses six times a year in September, November, January, March, May and July and opt to take their final examination after two, four or six months from their starting date.

TABLE 3

COURSE ENROLMENTS BY ACADEMIC YEAR
(1st September to 31st August)

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83
Adult Basic Education				
Gr. X Completion	1182	1169	1377	1892
Gr. XII Completion	595	1220	1817	2263
Subtotal	1777	2389	3194	4155
University				
Lower Division	1110	1955	2544	3337
Upper Division	364	484	433	546
Subtotal	1474	2439	2977	3883
Career-Technical-Vocational	1331	4049	4270	5285
Subtotal	1331	4049	4270	5285
Total	4582	8877	10441	13323

Two major conclusions can be drawn from the data in Table 3. Firstly, OLI is meeting a substantial educational need. 13323 (1982-83) is not an insignificant total and vindicates the minister's action in creating OLI. Secondly, enrolments in CTV courses almost equal enrolments in both the other programme areas. Drawing finer conclusions or attempting to make predictions on the basis of the data is problematical. For one thing, courses were being added to the curriculum at the same time enrolments were growing. For another, recent economic problems seem to have caused enrolment growth in most post-secondary institutions. But even with these reservations the data provide some basis for speculating about the future and for developing thoughtful hunches which can sharpen the process of setting institutional priorities.

4.22 Student Characteristics

The rhetoric which attended the birth of OLI was based in part upon reasoned guesses, in part upon the experience of distance education institutions in other jurisdictions, and in part upon enrolment data from British Columbia (see Table 1). It was

assumed, for example, that OLI would draw its enrolment mainly from the 25-44 age group. The "unmet need" mentioned by the minister was thought to include those presently denied access to further education by reason of geographic isolation, work schedule, physical disability or home responsibility.

Table 4 gives some indication of the type of students who enroll in OLI courses.

TABLE 4

STUDENT PROFILE DATA
(for students enrolling in January, 1980 and January, 1983)

		Jan.,1980	Jan.,1983
1.	Total course enrolments	2423	2459
	Total students	1810	2095
	Course enrolments per student	1.34	1.17
2.	Course enrolments by programme:		
	ABE	829 (34%)	716 (29%)
	CTV	686 (28%)	1048 (43%)
	UNIVERSITY	908 (37%)	695 (28%)
3.	Distribution (expressed in percentages):		
	a. Sex: Male	44	43.9
	Female	56	56.1
	b. Marital Status:		
	Single	40	52.7
	Married	60	47.3
	c. Age: 11-20	Not Available	13.1
	21-30)		46.5
	31-40)	72%	27.8
	41-50	Not Available	8.7
	d. Area: Metropolitan	29.0	36.3
	Non-metropolitan	71.0	63.7
	e. Occupation (major categories only):		
	Unpaid domestic duties	21.0	12.1
	Clerical and office staff	11.0	13.6
	Service occupations	10.0	15.2
	Unemployed	8.4	16.2

f. Highest level of academic attainment:		
Less than highschool graduation	34.0	21.0
Highschool graduation	32.0	41.7
Partial degree programme	18.2	17.1
Batchelor's degree	4.8	6.2
Career-vocational programme	11.0	14.0
g. Academic goal:		
Degree	16.0	7.1
Diploma or certificate	6.8	8.2
Grade X completion	19.0	4.2
Grade XII completion	11.9	12.7
Credit elsewhere	8.6	22.2
Career advancement	10.7	28.5
General interest	27.0	17.1

The above table shows data on the OLI student profile for the spring semester 1980 and the same semester in 1983. The former was the Institute's first full semester in which students were able to enroll in courses in all three programmes. The latter was the third of the semesters in which students had been able to enroll every two months instead of every four. Thus, the similarity in numbers between the two semesters is not a real measure of comparative enrolments: one of the surprising features of the new system has been the speed with which it has settled down into six semesters with roughly equal enrolments rather than, as many expected, three large and three smaller semesters.

Some explanations are in order for the figures cited. The percentages enrolled in each programme have been almost exactly reversed so that the CTV programme is now the largest of the three. This is partly a function of the number of courses available in January, 1980 - most of the courses offered were at the university level - and partly an accurate reflection of demand which is much higher for CTV and ABE courses than for university courses, at least in the disciplines where they are now offered. The percentage of male to female students is almost the same though the proportion of married to single students has changed markedly: this too may be a reflection of the kind of courses which are now being offered. While the highest concentration of students is still between the ages of 21 and 40, the mix within this group is changing markedly as the average age of OLI students has dropped below 30 and the largest age grouping of students is now 21 to 30.

This change, taken with the growing number of students who list themselves as unemployed, as taking courses for career advancement and as taking OLI courses for credit at other institutions, may indicate that students increasingly view OLI as an institution

which is gaining growing acceptance and which has specific benefits in terms of careers or academic programmes. It should be noted, in this context, that there has been a massive drop in the number of students who list themselves as taking courses for general interest.

It is clear from the figures cited, however, that OLI is meeting a substantial and growing part of the need for which it was created. A major portion of its students is still drawn from non-metropolitan areas where educational opportunity has for long been far more limited than in Greater Victoria and Greater Vancouver. The percentages have changed somewhat since January, 1980 but have been fairly constant for the last couple of years. The vast majority of its students are adults, employed either inside or outside the home, seeking either professional or personal enhancement while maintaining tasks which prevent them from doing this on a full-time basis. One interesting sidelight on this question which does not appear in Table 4 is that, in a recent survey, 45% of those who were unable to take courses from another institution indicated that they would not do so even if they could.

4.23. Student Tutoring, Support and Administration

The basic student support system was described in 3.4 above as it was conceived in the Institute's planning period. The essential features of this system have been preserved. A tutor provides students with subject-matter guidance for each course and an advisor assists them with course and programme selection, monitors progress and gives advice and help with such other matters as financial aid. These major "front-line" people are backed by a registry which supervises matters such as registration, maintenance of student records and examinations.

It was at first assumed that all of these services would be grouped in a single unit; but, as it became clear that tutors logically related much more closely to the programme area whose courses they were instructing, responsibility for the administration of the tutoring service was transferred from the Registry to the office of the Dean of Academic Affairs and for academic matters to the programme areas. This move, the only major change in the original plan, has generally worked well and is increasingly enabling tutors to play a greater role in the revision of existing courses and the development of new ones. Recent developments such as the appointment of a senior tutor in each university programme discipline have also helped to bring tutors more fully into the Institute's work.

Tutors are hired on a semester-by-semester basis and work out of their own homes contacting their students on telephones provided by OLI and by mail with comments on assignments. Students mail assignments to tutors who, within 72 hours, assess them and send them on to the Registry, which in turn, on the day of receipt,

records the grade and returns the assignment to the student. These parts of the system almost always work well: feedback to students, is, however, slowed down by the mail service, the one problem which may, more than any other, bind distance education institutions together. On average, tutors carry a load of approximately 30 students per semester and are thus able to give close attention to the requirements of each one. Many carry more than 30 students but few have anything like what may be regarded as a full-time load.

One of the most pleasing features of the OLI tutoring system is that the Institute has been able to develop a solid group of continuing tutors in each programme. This has provided a body of growing experience which has greatly assisted both the Institute and its students. Completion rates have increased steadily though not dramatically since the pilot semester in September, 1979 (see Table 5); and, though these results cannot yet be regarded as acceptable, the work of the tutors in achieving them is clear.

TABLE 5

COMPLETION RATES BY PROGRAMME AND BY SEMESTER

	Spring,1980	Fall,1982
ABE	48%	53%
CTV	50%	66%
UNIVERSITY	52%	63%

The advising service has also taken much the same shape as envisaged in the first plan. The institute's head office in Richmond houses the Senior Advisor and three others, with specific responsibility for the centre, for financial aid and for women's access respectively. Other advising centres have been set up in Victoria, Kamloops, Prince George, Kelowna, Nelson and Terrace.

The cost of maintaining this service has been and continues to be considerable; but equally the benefits are undeniable. The Institute has been able to adopt and maintain a much higher profile in areas where advising centres have been established: local relations and dealings with local academic institutions have almost invariably been good and students have appreciated contact with an OLI representative. Two major problems have arisen, however, which are not readily solvable.

The first of these the advising service shares with the Institute's tutors. It arises, as do many of OLI's problems, from the simple fact of the size of British Columia. Advisors - and

tutors - are isolated from the Institute and from one another. Regular meetings and workshops and telephone conversations can do something to overcome the feelings of isolation and even of alienation which this produces; but not enough. This has not yet been solved in spite of strenuous efforts to do so.

The second problem has a solution which is easier to identify though, in the current fiscal climate, still very difficult to effect. The only major aspect of the original development plan for the advising service which has not been adhered to is that which dealt with its expansion. By the time enrolment reached its present level, indeed somewhat before that point, the plan called for the establishment of twelve centres in the interior of the province. Financial restraint has been the cause of this; but the result has been that the advising service is being obliged to cut back on its services to students and to settle for, in many ways, minimal service lest it be swamped by ever-growing demand.

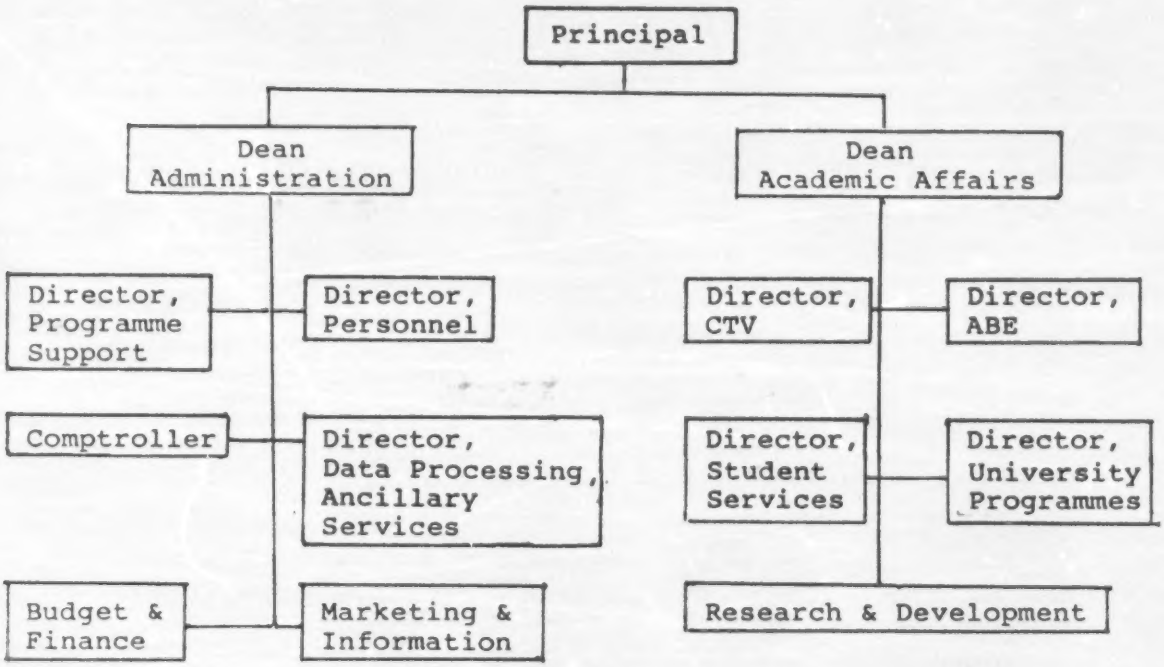
The final aspect of student services and administration is that of the Registry. Essentially, this is much like the registry of other higher American academic institutions though with some additions. One of these, the need to receive and process quickly student assignments, has been alluded to earlier. Another major difference lies in the Registry's responsibility for examinations. All OLI courses include the requirement that students must pass a final examination to gain course credit. Under the new, more flexible enrolment system, students may elect to be examined after two, four or six months; and examinations are set every two months. Thus, the examinations officer is presented with the enormously complex task of ascertaining student needs, making arrangements and scheduling examinations at up to seventy centres scattered around the province. It is perhaps one of the less enviable tasks in the Institute: that the system works is surprising but that it seems to work well may be a miracle.

4.3. The Institute

4.31. Organizational Structure

TABLE 6

ORGANIZATION CHART, SPRING 1983



It was noted in Section 3.2 that the original flat structure chosen by the first principal gave way to a more conventional, pyramidal structure. Though this has been through a number of versions and may still not be in its final shape, the structure has essentially remained the same and is now that shown in Table 6.

All the positions shown as reporting to the two Deans are at the director level except those in budget and finance, marketing and information, and research and development. Directors have full responsibility for their parts of the organization and take part in policy making discussions in the Institute. The other three appointments are, however, essentially staff positions reporting to the appropriate Dean.

4.32. Decision-making

The decision-making process at OLI has evolved since the Institute began largely within the structure set by the Board and indicated in Section 3.2. Here it was noted that the Board early determined that it would act as a policy-making rather than a management board and that it would act in its chosen area on the recommendation of the Principal. This has continued under the administration of both the first and second Principals, of whom the latter took office in July, 1980.

The process below this has been subject to much greater change, fluctuation and stress. The original administrative structure provided all directors with quick access to the Principal and, as the needs of the situation dictated it, with a decision-making process based essentially on discussion with him. This worked well for a time; and, as noted above, coordination was provided by a weekly directors' meeting.

The interposition of two Deans, to whom finally all directors reported, led to the need for new structures. Again, coordination under the new Principal was provided by the Administrative Committee, an expanded version of the old directors' meeting, which acted as a forum for discussion and for exchange of information. Each Dean set up procedures of his own to ensure maximum consultation among directors and others involved in reaching decisions that either or both Deans made on the basis of recommendations to the Principal and, where appropriate, the Board.

This structure has evolved so that the Administrative Committee is becoming entirely a forum for exchange of information while major operational or planning issues are discussed at meetings of the principal, deans and directors sitting as the Institutional Affairs Committee. Regular separate meetings are held between the Principal and Deans and each Dean and those reporting to him.

In this way, an attempt is made to reach concensus on major policy and operational questions which arise or at least to achieve maximum consultation and acceptance for decisions. Like most decision-making structures, this structure does not always work at maximum efficiency and it has not been arrived at without some strain. In a new, rapidly growing but still fairly small organization, however, the advent of constant harmony would probably provide a cause for much greater concern.

4.33. Finance

The amorphous and frustrating external budgetary process described in 3.2 remains with some slight modification. The Institute remains in the situation where funds are derived from two Ministries so that, while overall levels of funding may not necessarily present problems, the inability to move funds derived from one source to finance activities funded by another remains a problem, sometimes a severe one.

Internally, finance is the responsibility of the Dean of Administration who also holds the statutory position of Bursar. Individual directors prepare budget submissions each year (since provincially funded organizations in B.C. are funded annually) and submit them for discussion to their Dean. Final budgets are sent forward to the Bursar who, after discussions with the Principal and Dean of Academic Affairs and, where necessary, again with all or some of the directors, makes his recommendation to the Principal and the Board whose task it is to approve the budget request sent forward each year to the Councils. When budget allocations are made by the Councils, the Institute receives them and prepares an expenditure plan which is again submitted to the Board by the Principal on the recommendation of the Bursar.

Thus, while each executive officer of the Institute is responsible for his or her own departmental budget, overall financial responsibility resides with the Bursar. This is a statutory as well as a real responsibility since, under the Colleges and Provincial Institutes Act, the Bursar may be held responsible for the effective financial functioning of an institution.

4.34. Inter-institutional Relationships

This question, which is one of increasing importance in the Institute's affairs, may be treated at a variety of levels. Firstly, it has been noted above that one of the principles on which the Institute's early plans were made was that OLI must be regarded as part of an existing system of post-secondary eduction in B.C. Thus, its programmes must fit as well as possible with those of its sister institutions to allow easy transfer of students. This principle has been adhered to and the Institute has continually presented itself as an institution which had a mission to assist other agencies as well as to serve its own students. Hostility from many quarters greeted the Institute's birth and has, in some cases, continued to attend its growth to maturity. Increasingly, however, there is acceptance of the role of the Institute among the province's colleges and universities; and an increasing number of them have expressed willingness to make co-operative arrangements.

The first of these was the establishment of an Institute library service at Simon Fraser University, mentioned earlier. Courses have been or will be developed in collaboration with Simon Fraser and, it is to be hoped, with the other two provincial universities. Similarly, overtures are beginning to be made by a number of community colleges; and it is to be hoped that these arrangements will ultimately produce a more effective and integrated provincial system at this level which increases student access to learning at a variety of levels. In this context, it should also be noted that OLI has sold large numbers of course packages from all three programmes to other institutions within the province for use within their own programmes.

Secondly, OLI has always sought to expand its horizons outside the province of B.C. It has already been noted that useful planning assistance was received from the BOU and from Athabasca. The relationship with the latter has been particularly fruitful and has resulted in collaborative development and, more particularly, in sharing of courses. Recently, OLI has shared in the development of the Western Canadian Committee on University Distance Education, a group representing all institutions working in this area in the four western provinces of Canada. It has also joined the National University Consortium of the United States, which has appropriately changed its title and with which it is hoped to share both existing courses and future development of new programmes.

One final collaborative enterprise should be mentioned. The Institute is part of a six province consortium engaged in the development of phase one of a four phase programme for the teaching of English as a second language. The other members, in addition to B.C., are Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia. At this point, development of phase one, supervised by OLI on behalf of the consortium, is well under way; and this unique, inter-provincial collaboration bodes well for the future of such ventures.

The history of inter-institutional cooperation in distance education to this point indicates that, while it is theoretically a good idea, it is extremely difficult to translate this idea into useful practice. Nevertheless the growing experience of OLI and other institutions may indicate that earlier obstacles to collaboration can be overcome.

4.4. Conclusion

This account of the activities of the Open Learning Institute of British Columbia carried the story to the end of the summer of 1983. In doing this, it can be said to encompass a major and distinct period in the institute's history - from the conception through the planning stage to the development of a mature institution. To this point, it seems clear, OLI has met a large part of its mandate which essentially was to make available throughout the province of British Columbia courses and programmes to students who were unable or unwilling to take advantage of activities is growing, both within and without the province, and most particularly among the students whom it was designed to serve.

With the changing financial climate in the province and with changing and developing educational needs in a variety of areas, it is not unlikely that the mission of the institute will change, perhaps substantially and rapidly. What is clear, however, is that, since its inception in the summer of 1978, the Open Learning Institute has laid down firm foundations for a future which looks encouraging.

APPENDIX

The following is intended to assist the reader in understanding North American terminology and university degree structure. A B.A. or B.Sc. normally requires four years of full-time study. A year is 8 or 9 months. Some institutions require four 2-term years, others require 8 semesters, and still others (in the U.S.) require twelve 3-month quarters. Full-time study normally means about 15 hours per week of lectures and labs plus time for reading, study and assignments. 15 hours of class time is translated into varying types of credit: 15 units in a year format, 15 semester hours (or credit hours) in a semester format, 15 quarter hours in a quarter system. Normally, the student takes 5 courses each of a 3 unit/semester hour/quarter hour value to make up a full load. Thus, in a year format a student takes 5 courses in each of 4 years for a total of 20 courses or 60 units. In a semester format, a student takes 5 courses in each of 8 semesters for a total of 40 courses or 120 semester hours. In a quarter format, a student takes 5 courses in each of 12 quarters for a total of 60 courses or 180 quarter hours. In brief, 60 units = 120 semester hours = 180 quarter hours. A student's progress toward his degree is not normally counted in years but in these varying forms of credit.

Courses in the first two years are normally general or fundamental in nature and those taken in the final two years are more specialized. The former are often called lower division courses and the latter, upper division courses.

During the first two years a student will normally take one course each term in the discipline or disciplines (English, Mathematics, Sociology, etc.) in which he hopes to specialize. The remainder of his course work consists of general education requirements set by the institution (say, a foreign language, Mathematics, etc.), courses prerequisite to his proposed specialization (Psychology may require mathematical statistics) and electives.

During the final two years a student normally "majors" or specializes in his chosen discipline. He may also "minor" in a second discipline. A major may occupy as much as one-half a student's time and a minor, one-quarter of his time in the upper-division.

The remainder of the student's course-load is taken up with electives. Variations to the foregoing can be found: double majors, double minors, etc. The terms major and minor are an understood shorthand for major/minor concentration.

Thus, an institution which operates on the semester system and offers a B.A. with a major in English will normally offer four lower division courses in the disciplines (or 12 semester hours) and at least ten upper division courses (or 30 semester hours). Five of these ten courses would constitute a minor.

END